

PHYSICAL EXERCISES FOR OLDER PEOPLE TO IMPROVE WELLBEING

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**“Exercise is
about being
grateful for the
body you
have and
sustaining the
life you have.”**

Nicole Ari Parker

Exercise is extremely beneficial to your wellbeing; as we get older we tend to benefit more from exercise.

A small amount of physical exercise or engagement in physical activities daily can significantly improve energy levels and improve your mood.

Greater amounts of physical activity can provide additional benefits: this can be done by improve the intensity of the exercises, the duration of the exercises, or the frequency.

Ideally you would engage in some form of physical exercise every day for at least 15 minutes. This pamphlet will introduce you to simple exercises that can prepare you to tackle more intense physical activities in the future.

Getting Started

- Start slowly; there's a good chance tension has been building in you for years, so the problem won't be fixed in a day.
- Drink plenty of water unless your doctor has advised against this
- Never hold your breath during an exercise; you should always be breathing in or out
- Stretching should NOT cause any pain or serious fatigue. You may feel some discomfort that goes away when tension is released, but there should be no pain.
- Always be aware of the position of your spine. Do not arch it too much. Remember, you should not feel any pain during the exercises, and if you feel uncomfortable while you're doing the exercise it may be a good idea to stop.

Always consult your doctor before engaging in any new physical activity, especially if it has been a long time since you've engaged in physical activity

Stretches and Exercises

Side-Leg Raises

Side-leg raises can be performed on any flat surface such as a bed (can be performed before going to sleep) or on the floor. Refer to the image below as a reference

- Lay down on your side, keeping your upper body as relaxed as possible.
- Slowly raise your leg until you can't raise it any higher, and slowly bring it down.
- Do 10 of these, take a 2-3 minute break then turn to the other side and repeat with the opposite leg.

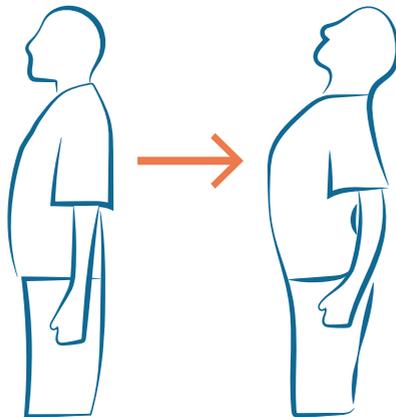


Reminder: you do not need to raise your leg as high as the image below. At no point should you feel pain or discomfort

Chest Raises

Chest raises can be performed when you're expecting to stand for a while (you may be cooking, or taking a shower), try rolling your shoulders back and puffing up your chest. This could alleviate a lot of tension in your upper body, especially in the chest and abdomen region. Refer to the image on the right as a reference

- Begin by standing straight; if this might be an issue you can stand against a wall with your arms along your side
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, and slowly raise your chest. Your body should naturally arch – you should raise your chest until you reach the point where you cannot raise it any more
- Hold this position briefly and slowly breathe out through your mouth, slowly bringing your chest back down – you should be standing straight now.
- Perform this as many times as you'd like

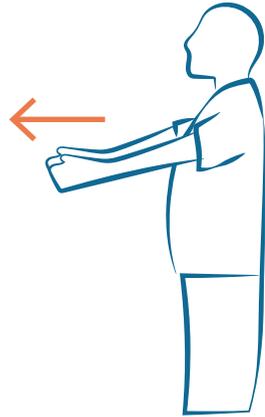


Reminder: you do not need to raise your chest as high as the image. At no point should you feel pain or discomfort.

Neck, Upper back and Shoulder Stretches

Stretches can be performed at any time, especially when you feel your body is stiff, or after you've been sitting down for too long. Stand up straight with your hands by your side.

- Bring your arms forward and then clasp your hands ensuring that your palms are facing the ground
- Slowly raise your arms to about chest height and gently push your palms away from your body. You should feel a stretch in your neck, upper back and shoulder.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds to start off. Release the stretch and repeat until satisfied.
- Over time you should increase the time you hold this position, up to 60 seconds for maximum benefit. This may take several months to a year. Be patient and start slow.



Reminder: If you feel any discomfort, you may be pushing your palms away with too much force; be gentler.

Neck Rotations

Neck Rotations help restore mobility and flexibility in your neck; as we get older we tend build more tension in our necks without releasing this tension. This exercise can be performed any time you're sitting.

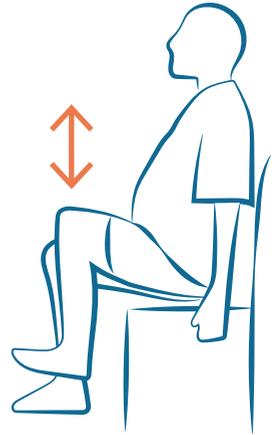
- Sit straight and look ahead
- Slowly turn your head towards your left shoulder as far as you can while still being comfortable. Hold this for a 5 seconds and slowly return to the starting position
- Repeat action again, this time looking right instead of left.
- This should be repeated 3 times on each side



Hip Marches

Hip Marches will improve flexibility and release tension in the hips and thighs. Refer to the image below as a reference

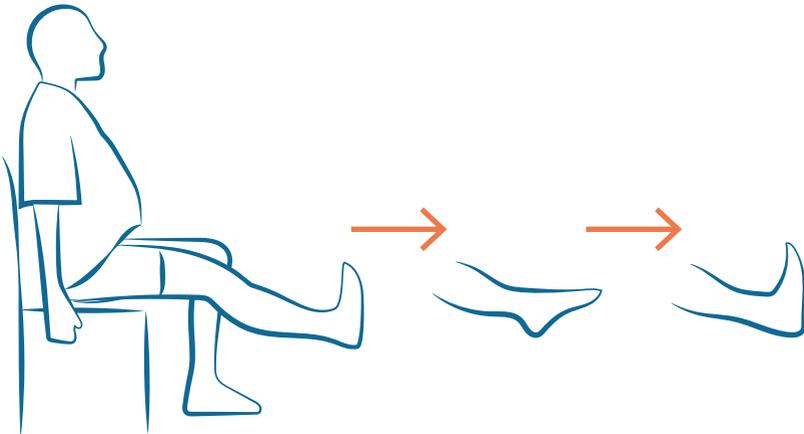
- Start by sitting upright on a chair, but do not lean back on the back of the chair.
- While keeping your knee bent, raise one leg up as far as is comfortable. And then slowly bring it down.
- This should be repeated 5 times on each leg



Ankle Stretches

Ankle Stretches will improve flexibility and release tension in ankle and calves. It will also reduce the risk of blood clots. Refer to the image below as a reference

- Sit upright and hold on to the sides of the chair with each arm
- Straighten one leg in front of you, lifting your foot off the floor.
- With the raised leg, point your toes away from you and then flex your toes towards you. Then lower your leg back to the floor.
- Do this 3 times for each leg



Reminder: Hold onto the sides of the chair for extra support.

Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health
Information Line

1300 794 991

Call your local doctor (GP)

Heart Foundation Line

1300 36 27 87

Useful Websites

Heart Foundation

www.heartfoundation.org.au

Office of Sport and Recreation,
NSW Government

www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/active/tips_start.asp

The Department of Health

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Nutrition+and+Physical+Activity-1

World Health Organisation

www.who.int/topics/physical_activity/en/



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health
Information Line through the
Telephone Interpreter Service
(TIS). Free to Australian citizens or
permanent residents.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2017

**“ I found people who
understood exactly what I
was going through ”**



